The ORPHANS *Legacy.*

A

SERMON

Preach'd in the

PARISH-CHURCH

OF

BARNSTAPLE,

On SUNDAY, *May* 5, 1734,

Occasion'd by the DEATH of the

Rev. Mr. *Samuel Thompson,*

Late VICAR there.

By B. Luck, A. M. *Vicar of* W. Downe,
And Master of the Grammar-School at Barnstaple.

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To the Worſhipful Mr. *Thomas Harris*, Mayor, the Aldermen, and other Members of the Ancient and Loyal Corporation of *Barnſtaple*, and all the Pariſhioners.

Gentlemen,

WHEN I performed the melancholy Office, in which Friendſhip engaged me, you were ſo tenderly affected with what you then heard, as to deſire it might be made publick. I could wiſh my Abilities and Leiſure had been greater; I ſhould with leſs Reluctance have obey'd your Commands.

I ſhould be very vain, if I thought this Performance owed its Succeſs to any thing, but your great Affection and Reſpect for that excellent Man, whoſe Death was the Occaſion of it. Your Value for him will make you paſs by any Defects in the Diſcourſe What Approbation it may meet with, either from thoſe, who perhaps did not know Mr. Thompſon, *or read with leſs Candour than you heard, I cannot judge; nor am very ſollicitous about it. I print, not for Fame or Bread, but to gratify my Friends.*

DEDICATION.

For your Sakes, and the Honour of our most holy Religion, I heartily join my Prayers with yours, That this Parish may be supply'd with a Successor, equal in Merit and Esteem to the worthy Deceas'd.

I am,

Your most oblig'd and faithful

Friend and humble Servant,

R. LUCK.

Psalm

PSALM cxii. Verse 2.

—*The Generation of the Upright shall be blessed.*

SELF-PRESERVATION is the strongest and most universal Principle implanted by Nature in all created Beings; next to which, that Affection, which all living Creatures bear towards their Off-spring, called by the *Greeks* στοργή, and manifest both in the producing and bringing them up, 'till they are capable of providing for themselves, seems to be predominant; and is, undoubtedly, settled in them by the God of Nature, for the Preservation and Continuance (in a natural Way) of those various Species of Creatures, which he was pleased at first, once for all, to make, for the Furniture, Ornament, and filling the Earth, the Sea, and Air.

To expatiate on this Subject, and to illustrate it by particular Instances, were an Undertaking fitter for a Lecture on natural Philosophy than a Sermon; especially in this Audience, and on the Occasion of my present Attendance.

I shall proceed therefore to observe to you, that this στοργή, or Care of Offspring, so constantly, so uniformly prevalent in Animals of inferior Rank, is, or ought to be, more so in reasonable Beings; and what

in those arises from Instinct, in us is, or ought to be, heightned and improved by Reason, and enforced by Conscience of Duty.

We are not to consider Children only in the natural Relation they have to us, as Parts of Ourselves, but in that more extended Interest our Country and all Mankind has in them; and in that more exalted Relation they have to God himself, the common Father of all.

The Apostle (1 *Tim.* v. 8.) says, *If any provide not for his own, he is worse than an Infidel.* And the Psalmist, in the Words now under Consideration, teaches Parents such a Method of providing for their own, as will make both themselves and their Families also happy.

The Generation of the Upright shall be blessed.

In handling this Subject, I shall,

I. Shew, who may be said to be the upright Man here spoken of.

II. In what Respect his Generation is blessed; or, what is the Happiness here promised to the Generation of the Upright.

I. Who may be said to be the upright Man. The old Translation of the Psalms, which our Church uses in her Liturgy, reads thus; *The Generation of the* Faithful *shall be blessed.* *Upright* and *Faithful* signify much the same Thing: For to be *upright* in one's Behaviour and Dealings with all we have any relation to, either in our publick or our private Capacity, in

Matters

Matters Civil or Religious, is being *faithful* to our Obligations to all; whether those Obligations be formally entred into by us, or lain upon us by the Relation we have to God, as reasonable Creatures, or to Mankind, as we are social Creatures.

In short then, *Uprightness* and *Faithfulness* consists in Religion and Virtue: Two Things, which God hath joined together, and no Man can put asunder; no, not the wittiest moral Infidel, (which I think is almost a Contradiction in Terms) whom any former Age has produced, or whom too many of the present Age so highly boast of and caress.— Virtue cannot surely be founded but on the Principle of Religion; nor Religion be proved sincere but by its genuine Fruit, Righteousness. The loudest and longest Devotions; the most punctual Attendances upon Ordinances; in a Word, the strictest Profession of Religion, is mere Shew, and Pharisaical Hypocrisy, without a conscious Discharge of moral Duties, as you may observe from *Ps.* xv. The royal Prophet puts this Question, *Lord, who shall dwell in thy Tabernacle: or who shall rest upon thy holy Hill?* *i. e.* What Qualifications are requisite to render a Man a devout and acceptable Frequenter of thy Tabernacle, planted on the holy Hill, *Sion*? He answers, *He that doth the Thing that is right, and speaketh the Truth from his Heart.* The whole Psalm is a compendious Character of a virtuous Man; and being an Answer to his Question, in the same Verse gives us to understand, that none, but such, can be an acceptable Worshipper of God. The last Verse contains the greatest Encouragement to endeavour to come up to the Character he had given,

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viz. Whoso doth these Things; shall never fall; i. e. The Man who squares his Actions by these Rules, need never fear his miscarrying in his Duty to God.

On the other Hand, an irreligious Man may boast of his moral Behaviour as confidently as he pleases; his bare Word will not be taken by the Wise, who know, that the Belief and Fear of God is the only Security he can give for his Behaviour to Man: For what both ancient and modern Unbelievers call Morality, is nothing else but Humour, Inclination, Interest, or Vain-glory: And be their Actions ever so *materially* good, they are rather the Vertue of Constitution and Complexion, than of the Mind, or the Result of a fixt Determination and Purport of the Heart. In a Word, what has been said of the Character of an *upright* or faithful Man, is compendiously drawn up in the Vindication of his Life and Doctrine, which St. *Paul* made before *Felix*; viz. *Herein I exercise my self, to have always a Conscience void of Offence toward God, and toward Man.*

A fuller Display of the good Man's Character, I shall have an Occasion to give you anon, when I come to mention the Deceas'd, to whose Memory, and your Edification, I dedicate this Discourse.

I proceed now,

II. To shew, in what Respect his Generation is blessed; or what is the Happiness here promised to the Generation of the Upright.

In the Beginning of this Verse, the Psalmist says of him, *His Seed shall be mighty upon Earth.* And (*Ps.* xxv. 13.) *He that feareth the Lord, his Soul shall*

shall dwell at Ease; and his Seed shall inherit the Earth. And the least Thing he says of him is this, *I have been young, and now am old; yet never saw I the Righteous forsaken, nor his Seed begging Bread.* Power and Riches seem by these Expressions to be entail'd on the Posterity of the Great and Good. And the Descendants of such Parents, as were more eminent for Goodness than Greatness, (for it is not necessary that they should, nor very common that they do, both go together,) are at least secured from Want, though not assured of Wealth and Grandeur; Things by no Means necessary to solid Happiness, and consummate Virtue, but often a Snare to both.

A good Man knows that God is his Protector and Patron, infinitely wise to chuse for him, and sufficiently bountiful to bestow what he knows to be best for him; and therefore commits himself and Posterity to the Disposal of the Almighty: And the happy Effect of such a Resignation, is Peace to himself in this World, Immortality in the next, and a sufficient Provision for his Orphans from the Father of the Fatherless.

From what has been said you will observe, that the Blessedness here promised to the Generation of the Upright, is Temporal; a competent Supply at least of the good Things of this Life; which in this much resembles the Manna rained from Heaven to feed the *Israelites*; *He that gathered much, had nothing over; and he that gathered little, had no lack.* If Riches are to be rated by the Necessities of Nature, a little is enough; if by Pride and Luxury, nothing is too much. Our blessed Lord told his Disciples, *that a Man's Life consisteth not in the Abundance of the*

Things which he possesses; *i. e.* The Abundance of the Riches of this World does not promote the Happiness even of this Life. Now upon the indisputable Truth of this Position, I dare appeal to the Observation and Experience of all who hear me for the Truth of the Doctrine of my Text. Do we not daily see Examples of God's Bounty to the Children of his faithful Servants? What Supplies of their Wants do they meet with from the Liberality of unexpected Friends! With what Success are they visibly blessed in their honest Endeavours for improving their little Store? So sure, so lasting an Entail on Children is the Piety and Virtue of their Parents, as nothing can cut off, but their own flagitious Courses: Whereas *the Treasures of Wickedness profit nothing*; neither those who by vile Ways and Means heaped them up; nor their Children to whom they leave them, who very often as profusedly squander them away as they were wickedly acquired: Or if they are innocent themselves, the Extortioner or Deceiver often consume what they have, it being very usual for Divine Providence to permit one Sinner to punish the Iniquities of another.

I have said, the Blessings descending on the Posterity of the Upright are Temporal, not Eternal: For neither Heaven nor Hell go by Inheritance, no more than Virtue or Vice. The Rewards and Punishments in another Life, are merely Personal. In this moral State, we know nothing of the Departed; their Works follow them to a State invisible to us. The Inheritance eternal in the Heavens, is the Gift of God to the Spirits of just Men made perfect: The most righ-

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teous Man can't *merit* it for himself, much less for another: It can't be bequeathed as a Patrimony to his Heirs; it is no Ways attainable but by personal Service. The Heirs of this heavenly Inheritance *are born, not of Blood, nor of the Will of the Flesh, nor of the Will of Man, but of God.* His *Seed may inherit the Earth,* as the only Reward of his Integrity which this World can be sensible of, for the Manifestation of God's especial Favour and Providence —— and for an Enouragement to them and others to follow his Steps: But as for Heaven, they have no Claim or Title to it, but by the Privilege of a *New Birth in Christ; being begotten again unto a lively Hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

We may be influenced by God's Promises, and are so, whenever we obey his Precepts; but the actual Possession of those Promises, to which those who have died in the Lord have attained, being unknown to us here below, cannot influence us: Whereas those temporal visible Blessings bestowed upon the Generation of such who were a burning and shining Light upon Earth, and their Lives Examples of Piety and Virtue, are a manifest Proof to the World, *that verily God careth for the Righteous,* not only in their own Persons, but in their Children; and moreover furnish the strongest Motives and Arguments for a good Life, on the Score of Affection towards (perhaps) the dearest Relation in Life; an Affection implanted by Nature, improved by Reason, and most strongly bound upon us by Religion.

In handling this Point, I have endeavoured not only to illustrate the Truth of it both from Scripture and

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Experience, and shewn what the Blessing here promised is; but I have likewise suggested some Reasons, why God deals thus graciously with the Children of his Servants.

I shall now only consider more distinctly one particular Reason for it, and then conclude this Subject.

One great Reason for it I take to be this; *viz.* The Vindication of God's Providence over the Affairs of the World. The great Advantage which Men notoriously had have very often in worldly Matters over Men, not only in Appearance, but in Reality good, (as far as we can call any mortal Man good) has furnished ungodly Men with Arguments to blaspheme and deny the Goodness and Providence of God —— *to strengthen themselves in their Wickedness* —— and to insult those who own the Cause of God and Virtue, as Servants to a Master, who either knows not, or heeds not, or cannot reward their dutiful Obedience to his Laws. The present Impunity and Prosperity of the Ungodly is the Reason, not *only that they are so holden with Pride, and overwhelmed with Cruelty* — *that their Eyes swell with Fatness; and they do even what they list:* It is moreover a stumbling Block to those, who have cleansed their Hearts, and washed their Hands in Innocency, (as the Psalmist observes and complains, *Psal.* lxxiii.) — and would tempt them to say *almost even as they*, and so condemn the Generation of God's Children; did not Faith and Observation make them *understand the End of those Men*; *viz.* That being giddy with the Heighth of their Station, they are *thrown headlong from the slippery Places whereon they stood*; *consume*;

ſame; periſh; and come to a fearful End: Whereas the Goodneſs of God endureth continually; and his Mercy, and Paternal Care, *is on them that fear him throughout all Generations.*

Godlineſs is profitable unto all Things, having Promiſe of the Life which now is, and of that which is to come. Great and certain is the Reward of Righteouſneſs in Heaven, and good Men will be abundantly ſatisfied with it: But that thoſe Worldlings, who meaſure temporal Happineſs by large Poſſeſſions, may be convinced that Godlineſs is not unprofitable, even in reſpect of this Life, whatever may ſeem wanting to complete the Promiſe of Happineſs here to the Upright, is ſufficiently made up by God's Bounty to his Poſterity. Thus is God's Providence juſtified to the World, and the Truth of his Promiſe made made viſible; *whilſt Fathers and Mothers, Brothers and Siſters, and Houſes and Lands,* to which they had neither Relation nor Title, ſhall be provided by God for the happy Orphans of Religious Parents.

From what has been ſaid upon this Head this Propoſition ariſes, That the ſureſt and moſt effectual Proviſion Parents can make for the Welfare of their Children, is to lead a godly, righteous, and ſober Life. 'Tis this will derive a Bleſſing upon them, and leave them a laſting Inheritance: The good Example they ſet them, joined with a religious Education, may (by God's Grace) ſtir them up alſo to good Works, and ſo prove a Means of their eternal Welfare: But God's Promiſe of temporal Bleſſings to them, for the Sake of their Fathers, will be accompliſhed by his all-wiſe Providence, by Methods which human Policy could

not foresee, nor human Malice and Power be able to controll.

What restless fruitless Pains do worldly Men take *to heap up Riches which they know not who shall gather!* How sollicitously do they join House to House, and Land to Land, whilst every last Acquisition makes Way for a new one, in Hopes to leave their Substance for their Babes! But alas! what little Reason will their Posterity have to praise their Sayings or their Actions, when they shall to their Astonishment find, *that God casteth away the Substance of the Wicked!* The Sons of the Mighty shall find nothing, and the Children of such rich ones *shall inherit the Wind*; whilst *God filleth the Generation of the Faithful with his hid Treasures.*

Men, Brethren, and Fathers, let me exhort you, as you have any Value for your Souls, any Regard to a good Name, any Bowels of Love and Tenderness of Paternal Affection for your Posterity, entitle them to the Favour and Protection of God by walking yourselves in the Commandments of the Lord blameless; by Piety, Uprightness, and Integrity of Heart and Life; by promoting God's Glory, and doing all the Good you can to all Men; not confining all your Thoughts and Industry to the narrow Circle of your own personal Interests and Families. St. *Paul's* Direction is, *Let no Man seek his own, but every Man anothers Wealth*; (1 *Cor.* x. 24.) a Rule, which if well weighed and duly followed, would make good this seeming Paradox, That private Interest is most reputably and surely served by Publick-Spiritedness.

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Especially have a Care that the Wages of Iniquity be not cast into your Treasury: It is an accursed Thing, and will prove a Worm and a Canker, and eat out the rest, however fairly acquired; and so be a Curse, instead of a Blessing, to those Innocents for whom you are sollicitous: For their private and personal Vertues will not be able to skreen their Fortunes, derived to them, from the providential temporal Punishment which manifestly attends on Wealth unduly gotten, and as unjustly bequeathed.

I shall conclude this Subject with two Aphorisms, *viz.* That a Child's best Legacy is his Parents Virtue. ——That in the final Event and Issue of Things, the Children of Light will be found wiser *for* their Generation, though not *in* their Generation, than the Children of this World.

I shall not need to crave your Patience, whilst I am endeavouring to pay a due Regard to the Memory of your Venerable Pastor deceas'd, whose Life was an Illustration of the Character of the Upright Man: And the gracious Dispensations of Providence towards himself and Family were a Proof of the Doctrine contained in the Text.

He was by Birth and Education of the Sons of the Prophets, his Father and Brethren being of the Sacred Function as well as himself; to which, as he was early devoted, he made it his whole Business, from his Youth, to qualify himself for it, by diligent Study and strictest Morals; being desirous *from a Child to know the Scriptures*, and careful to preserve himself unspotted from the World, that he might be a *Vessel meet for the Work of the Ministry*; for the edifying

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the Body of Christ; that *he might come to the Knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man, unto the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ.*

I must forbear a while to speak of him in his publick Capacity, in that Relation he had to you for more than the last half of his Days. If we consider him in his private Capacity, as a Neighbour and a Friend, we must acknowledge him to have been an eminent Example of the strictest Truth in Conversation —— of most extended Benevolence —— of Simplicity of Manners —— of Integrity of Heart —— of sweetest Temper and Disposition both to please and to be pleased; in which consists Good-Nature. —— So free from crafty Design, and so abhorrent of Fraud, as not to be sufficiently cautious and watchful against it in others. —— He was so tenderly compassionate to People in Distress, as in his Bounty to have less Regard to their Desert, and to his own Fortunes, than to their Want. In his Friendship he was most constant: So candid, as to interpret every Thing in the best Sense; and so sacred in keeping the Secrets of his Friend, that Silence itself could not have preserved them safer. *David* and *Jonathan* could not be more faithful and affectionate. In a Word, he was our *Nathanael*, an *Israelite* indeed, in whom was no Guile.

In his Family he was served chearfully, his Orders being delivered with Gentleness and Mildness of Speech; and nothing was required that was not necessary. Good Words and punctual Rewards made his Servants studious to obey him; and Family Religion and good Instructions kept up in them a Sense of Duty: He knew the best Rule in Oeconomy

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was *Joshua*'s Resolution, *As for me and my House, we will serve the Lord.*

It is no Wonder that a Man so formed by Nature, and so improved by Grace, as he was; so amiable in his Person, and so engaging in his Temper, should prove an excellent Husband to two as happy Wives as ever fell to one Man's Lot.

I beg Leave of his Relict, in this publick Manner, to mention what (I fear) will rather be commended in her, than often imitated by Mothers-in-law; *viz.* That her Regard to the Memory of so deserving a an Husband has been most convincingly shewn by a very considerable Benefaction to the Orphan, his only and dearly-loved Offspring.—— I cannot forbear here to take Notice of another Benefactress to the Family of the Deceas'd; one no way related to him, but as one of his Flock from her Childhood; under no particular Obligations, but influenced merely by a liberal Heart, which always devises liberal Things; enabled by the Affluence of her Fortunes, and determined to the Object of her Munificence by the Merit of the Man, whose eminent Piety and Virtue had recommended him to her particular Esteem and Friendship: Such was the Man, our Neighbour, our sweet Companion, our faithful Friend, in his private Capacity.——But how shall my faint Description of him, as a Minister of God, an Ambassador of Christ, come up to the Dignity of the Subject! to what yourselves know of him! to what your silent Sorrow and solemn Grief testify of him! What can I, indeed what need I say, to aggravate your Sense of your Loss in him; to endear his Memory to a People so tenderly

loving, that, as St. *Paul* expresses the Love and Reverence of the *Galatians* towards him, *if it had been possible you would have plucked out your own Eyes, and have given them to him.*——To a People so dearly loved, that I bear him Record, nothing but Death could have separated him from you. I speak what I have heard from him upon a particular Occasion, and what I am perswaded yourselves believe of him.

His prudent well-tempered Zeal, the Exemplarinesses of his Life, his Meekness and Condescention to the Weak, frequently added such to the Church, whom Prejudice of Education and inveterate Custom had kept from it; and even those who continue to dissent from us in Point of Discipline and Rights of Worship, united to us with full Consent in Love, Esteem, and Veneration of so worthy a Minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ: Every good Man spake of his Praise, and the Mouth of Slander and Prophaneness was not opened against him.

With what unwearied Diligence did he apply himself to all the various Duties of his Calling! *keeping back nothing from you that was profitable, teaching you publickly from House to House; not counting even Life dear,* so that he might finish the Ministry, which *he had received of the Lord Jesus.*

The constant Duty of the Pulpit, believe me, requires no small Portion of Time and Pains, to discharge it in any tolerable Manner: But when the daily Avocations from Study, unavoidable in so populous a Town, are added to the stated Duty of Preaching; such a Complication of different Labours requires

requires an uncommon Strength of Constitution, as well as Zeal and Fervour of Spirit and Capacity of Mind, to carry a Man through them, even a few Years.

To [illegible] the Doubts of the Scrupulous—to comfort the [illegible] and Languishing—to pour Balm into the Wounds of the Desponding—to awaken the Stupid to a sense of their Sin and Danger, and perswade the Stubborn by the Terrors of the Lord—to make up Breaches, and compose Differences—to rebuke with Meekness and Authority together—to seek those that were lost, and to confirm returning Sinners in their good Purposes—to bear with the Impertinence and Importunity of the Querulous and Discontented: These, my Brethren, were the continual Employments which wasted the Lamp of Life, and hastened the Fruition of the exceeding great Reward of his Labours amongst us, laid up for him in the Kingdom of Heaven; whither though his Works follow him, yet the Memorial of them is fresh and fragrant among us who survive, and will continue so when his Body is consumed to Dust: *For the Righteous shall be had in everlasting Remembrance*; and what must needs be a comfortable Consideration under the afflictive Loss of such an Husband, such a Father, *The Generation of the Upright shall be blessed.*

FINIS.